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USE OF ASSISTED READING TO INCREASE CORRECT READING RATES AND DECREASE ERROR RATES OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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The effects of assisted reading on 3 elementary students with learning disabilities were evaluated using a multiple baseline design. Data were collected from the students' oral reading from their basal texts. The results indicated an increase in number of words read correctly as well as a decrease in the number of words read incorrectly when assisted reading was used in the classroom.

DESCRIPTORS: assisted reading, learning disabilities, elementary students, reading

Assisted reading has been successfully implemented with children with learning disabilities (Carbo, 1978) and with Spanish-speaking students (Van Wagenen, Williams, & McLaughlin, 1994). This procedure involves having students listen to taped passages, read along with the teacher as the teacher reads the passage, and then read the material independently. The present study was designed to study the effects of assisted reading on the correct oral reading rates and error rates of elementary school students with learning disabilities rather than with older children with learning disabilities. This study extends Carbo's results by using a typical basal reading series rather than specially designed (teacher-made) reading passages and by applying the procedures to young children with learning disabilities rather than to older children with learning disabilities.

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METHOD

Participants and Setting

The participants were 3 elementary students who were diagnosed as learning disabled by the criteria employed in the province of Alberta, Canada, and ranged in age from 7 years 1 month to 7 years 4 months. The setting was a combination regular education class with an enrollment of 9 first-grade students and 5 second-grade students. The class was staffed by a certified teacher (first author) and a part-time teacher's aide.

Dependent Measures

The dependent variables were correct reading rate and error rate. *Correct reading rate* was defined as the number of correctly read words divided by the number of minutes read. *Error rate* was defined as the number of words read incorrectly divided by the number of minutes read. Errors were classified as mispronunciations, omissions, substitutions, insertions, or repetitions.

Experimental Design and Procedures

A multiple baseline design across participants was used to evaluate the effects of assisted reading. Baseline data were gathered from the basal text, *Nelson Reading Series.* Instruction during baseline consisted of the

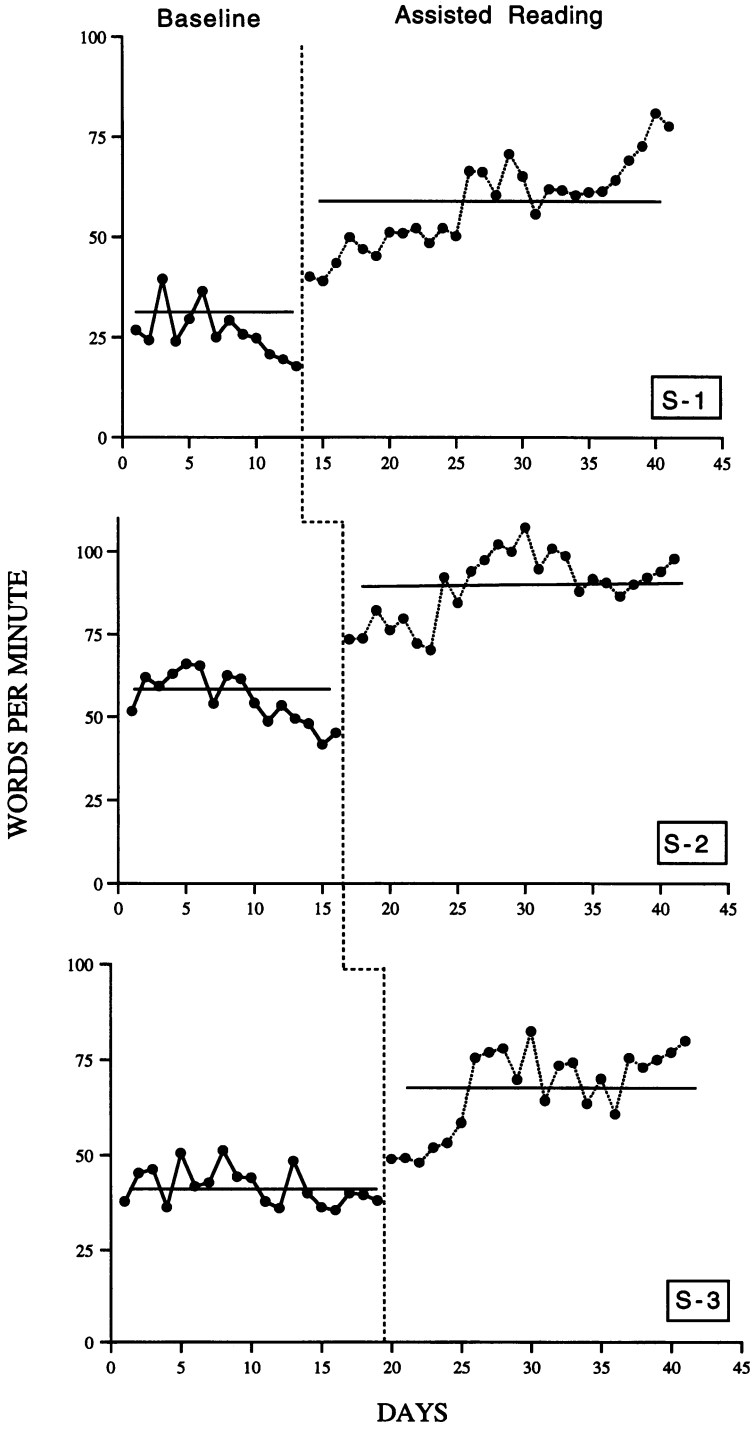

Figure 1. The correct reading rates during baseline and assisted reading for each participant. Solid horizontal lines indicate condition means.

teacher's introducing and discussing vocabulary with the students and the teaching of phonetic rules and generalizations. Students practiced silently reading a designated passage once. At the end of this 45-min reading period, each student read independently for 4 min into a tape recorder. No feedback was given to the students regarding their reading rates.

During assisted reading, the teacher provided students with prerecorded passages from the *Nelson Reading Series.* The students listened to the recorded passages using earphones while they followed the lines of print with their fingers. After listening to the passage once, the students then proceeded to read the passage three times aloud while listening to the tape recorder. Feedback was provided as encouragement for trying and as general praise. The students were required to read the passage independently for 4 min into a tape recorder the morning after the passage was practiced. This sequence continued Monday through Thursday, with a new passage each day. Data were collected only from the independent readings.

Interrater Agreement

Interobserver checks were made twice during baseline and three times during assisted reading for each student. Interobserver agreement for words read correctly averaged 98% (range, 95% to 100%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the initiation of assisted reading, there was an immediate increase in correct reading rates for all 3 students (see Figure 1). For S-1, correct reading rate increased from a mean of 28 words per minute (range, 18 to 40) during baseline to a mean of 60 words per minute (range, 39 to 81) during assisted reading. For S-2, correct reading rate increased from a mean of 58 words per minute (range, 48 to 65) during baseline to a mean of 83.5 words per minute (range, 74 to 107) during assisted reading. For S-3, the correct reading rate increased from a mean of 38 words per minute (range, 30 to 40) during baseline to a mean of 68 (range, 46 to 82) during assisted reading. For S-1, the error rate decreased from a mean of 3.6 errors per minute during baseline to a mean of 2.1 errors during assisted reading. For S-2, the error rate decreased from a mean of 6.2 errors per minute during baseline to a mean of 1.9 errors during assisted reading. For S-3, the error rate decreased from a mean of 4.4 errors per minute during baseline to a mean of 2.0 errors per minute during assisted reading.

The assisted reading techniques used in this study were efficient as well as effective. Teacher time involved in preparing reading tapes was minimal; it took approximately 10 min to prepare a tape for a student. In addition, the assisted reading procedure was easily incorporated into the classroom routine and allowed the teaching of reading to become individualized.

Further research might focus on determining the differential effects of specific components of assisted reading and the effects of assisted reading on comprehension. Components to be examined could include the number of daily readings, the reading rate of the modeled passages, taped versus live modeled reading of the passages, criterion rates for changing passages, and the effects of reward systems combined with assisted reading.

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